

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /016 R

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DRAFTED BY S/S-O: DMORAN

APPROVED BY S/S-O: MTANNER

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P 222119Z JUL 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 172544

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT DAMASCUS 2785 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO BEIRUT
AND PARIS DTD 22 JUL 75

QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2785

EXDIS

DEPT PASS DIA AND CINCEUR

S/S-O PLEASE ALERT NEA, NEA/ARN, PM/MC

BEIRUT AND PARIS FOR RCAAS, USDAOS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ESTC, BEXP, BTIO, SY

SUBJ: SYRIAN DESIRE TO BUY 15 BOEING CHINOOK HELICOPTERS

REF: DAMASCUS 2577 (IR 6 891 0092 75) (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. BOEING REP REPORTS SYRIAN AIR FORCE ANXIOUS TO
BUY 15 CHINOOK HELICOPTERS, \$70 MILLION PACKAGE, DELIVERY
BEGINNING AROUND SEPT 1977 TO MID 1978. AMBASSADOR URGED BOE-
ING TO REQUEST ADVISORY OPINION FROM DEPT/MC ASAP BEFORE SYRIAN
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EXPECTATIONS RAISED EVEN FURTHER, THUS CREATING POTENTIAL

NEGATIVE FACTOR IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. BOEING TO APPROACH DEPT/MC NEXT WEEK. WE BELIEVE RAPID RESPONSE ON ADVISORY OPINION WOULD MINIMIZE POTENTIAL EMBARRASSMENT IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AT THIS ELICATE STAGE IN MIDDLE EAST.
END SUMMARY.

2. JAMES A. FELITON, INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR, HELICOPTERS, BOEING INTERNATIONAL (ROME), BRIEFED AMBASSADOR, DAO AND ECONOFF JULY 21 ON STATUS OF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH SYRIAN AIR FORCE (SAF) OFFICERS RE SYRIAN DESIRE TO PURCHASE 15 BOEING CHINOOK CH 47 HELICOPTERS, TOTAL VALUE OF SALE/SPARES/ TRAINING, ETC., PUT AT \$70 MILLION BY FELITON.

3. SINCE FELITON'S MORE PESSIMISTIC REPORT TO EMBASSY JUNE 30, BASED ON HIS THREE PREVIOUS TRIPS TO SYRIA (REFTEL) AND HIS MEETINGS WITH SAF OFFICERS AT PARIS AIR SHOW, FELITON SAID HE WAS STRUCK DURING HIS CURRENT DISCUSSIONS WITH EAGERNESS EXHIBITED BY SAF TO PURCHASE CHINOOKS. HE SAID MONEY IS ALREADY ON HAND FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND SARG'S NEW MILITARY BUDGET. ONLY REMAINING STEP IN THAT DIRECTION IS TO OBTAIN FINAL SAUDI CLEARANCE RE ACTUAL PURCHASE. SUCH CLEARANCE, FELITON IS TOLD, WILL BE OBTAINED IN ABOUT TWO WEEKS.

4. FELITON SAID CHINOOK'S RUGGED PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS PUT IT WELL AHEAD OF SOVIET MI-8, OF WHICH HE BELIEVED SAF HAD 35 TO 40 I INVNTORY. CHINOOK COULD DO MUCH MORE WORK, PARTICULARLY UNDER SYRIAN CONDITIONS OF HIGH TEMPERATURES AND ALTITN AND WITH LESS MAN-POWER. WITH FINANCING AVAILABLE, SAF COMMANDERS WANTED TO MOVE QUICKLY TO CONTRACT SIGNATURE. DELIVERIES WOULD BEGIN ONE EACH DURING LAST FOUR MONTHS 1977, FOLLOWED BY TWO EACH MONTH IN 1978 UP TO TOTAL OF 15. ONE CHINOOK WOULD BE FITTED AS VIP MODEL.

5. FELITON SAID THE CHINOOKS WOULD BE USED BY SAF PRIMARILY FOR "COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTS", SINCE SYRIAN CIVIL AVIATION HAD NO HELICOPTER CAPABILITY. HE NOTED THEY, OF COURSE, WOULD BE USED BY SAF FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT MOVEMENT. MISSIONS SHOULD NEED ARISE.

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6. AMBASSADOR ASKED ABOUT AND LEARNED BOEING HAD NOT BEEN IN TOUCH WITH DEPT/MC RE THIS POSSIBLE SALE. AMBASSADOR URGED BOEING TO REQUEST MC ADVISORY OPINION ASAP. HE SAID IT WOULD BE WELL FOR BOEING TO HAVE SUCH ADVISORY OPINION BEFORE GETTING DEEPER INTO THIS DEAL AND CREATING FALSE EXPECTATIONS WITHIN SARG, AND IN SAUDI ARABIA AS WELL, GIVEN APPARENT SAUDI DESIRE TO ENCOURAGE SYRIA TO DEPEND LESS ON SOVIETS FOR SUCH EQUIPMENT. (SEE ALSO SANA 1971.) FELITON SAID BOEING

WOULD BE SEEING DEPT NEXT WEEK AND HE EMPHASIZED NEED FOR QUICK RESPONSE GIVEN HEAD OF STEAM BUILT UP ON SYRIAN SIDE AND POSSIBILITY DIRECT SYRIAN APPROACH TO AMBASSADOR, THUS ELEVATING MATTER TO GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT LEVEL. (FELITON SAID HIGH RANKING SAF OFFICER CONSIDERING RECOMMENDING TO PRESIDENT ASAD THAT SYRIA USE ALL ITS "INFLUENCE" WITH USG TO OBTAIN APPROVAL) FELITON CONCLUDED THAT IF USG ADVISORY OPINION NEGATIVE, SYRIANS WOULD GO TO FRENCH (SUPER FRELON HELICOPTER) OR BACK TO SOVIETS. (QUESTION: WOULD APPRECIATE COMMENT ON PARA 2A REFTEL RE USG EXPORT CONTROLS ON SUPER FRELON GIVEN SIKORSKY ASSISTANCE IN MANUFACTURE THIS APCRAFT.)

7. CONCLUSION: SEEMS CLEAR THAT BOEING AND SYRIANS HAVE INDEED ENTERED PRELIMINARY NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS DEAL, HOPING THAT RAPIDLY DEVELOPING USG/SARG BILATERAL RELATIONS WILL MEAN EVENTUAL USG APPROVAL OF SALE. TO PREVENT UNREALISTIC AND POTENTIALLY HARMFUL EXPECTATIONS, RECOMMEND THAT MC PROVIDE BOEING WITH PROMPT ADVISORY OPINION AS SOON AS IT IS REQUESTED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT, HELICOPTERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE172544
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O: DMORAN
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750253-0360
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750732/aaaabcxq.tel
Line Count: 137
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 DAMASCUS 2577
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <03 OCT 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN DESIRE TO BUY 15 BOEING CHINOOK HELICOPTERS
TAGS: ESTC, BEXP, BTIO, SY, BOEING
To: USCINCEUR
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006